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Military posts on the road from Missouri to New Mexico.

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Recommended Citation

H.R. Rep. No. 154, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1859)

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MILITARY POSTS ON THE ROAD FROM MISSOURI TO NEW MEXICO.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 132.]

FEBRUARY 3, 1859.—Laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. FAULKNER, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred a bill to establish certain military posts on or near to the road made by Lieutenant Colonel J. E. Johnston, leading from Missouri to New Mexico, have, according to order, had the same under consideration, and submit the following report:

The committee being of the opinion that there exists no such urgent necessity for the establishment of military posts at the points indicated in said bill as would justify the appropriation asked for, respectfully recommend that the bill do not pass.

They submit as part of their report the subjoined communication from the Secretary of War.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, May 15, 1858.

SIR: I have the honor to enclose herewith a report of the officer in charge of the Office of Explorations and Surveys, in answer to your communication of the 4th instant, enclosing a bill to establish certain military posts on or near the road made by Lieutenant Colonel J. E. Johnston, leading from Missouri to the Territory of New Mexico.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Hon. CHARLES J. FAULKNER,
*Acting Chairman of Committee on Military Affairs,
House of Representatives.*

The bill enclosed by you is herewith returned.

WAR DEPARTMENT,

Office Explorations and Surveys, Washington, May 7, 1858.

SIR: The letter of the Hon. Charles J. Faulkner, enclosing a bill proposing to establish certain military posts, having been referred to this office, the following statement is made in regard to the subject:

There are at present two great routes to New Mexico, terminating at or near Santa Fé: one starting from the west boundary of Missouri, near the junction of the Kansas with the Missouri river, which is the most important of all; and the other from Fort Smith, on the western boundary of the State of Arkansas, by the Canadian river, a branch road striking this last in or near the cross timbers. It is now proposed to open another route from the southwestern frontier of Missouri.

For this last purpose two routes were examined in the summer of 1857, under Colonel Johnston, in connexion with the establishment of the southern boundary of Kansas, and concerning these he has made a brief report. One of these routes continues on and near the southern Kansas boundary to the Cimmarron river, and would then follow the Cimmarron route to Santa Fé. The other would proceed directly from the southwest corner of Missouri to the bend of the Canadian river, in longitude 99° , and then follow the Canadian route to Santa Fé. For the latter of these Colonel Johnston indicated his decided preference, as being better and more direct.

The resolution introduced by Mr. Phelps, however, seems to indicate the inferior route as the one on which to establish the three posts. In this case the most suitable points would be, *first*, on the Arkansas river, at the crossing of the road where the country is fertile and well wooded and inviting to settlers; *second*, in the vicinity of the Salt Plains on the Red Fork; and *third*, on Rabbit Ear creek, at the junction of this route with the Cimmarron road.

The first point is in a country inhabited mostly by friendly Indians, and would not be much needed for defence, and the post might probably be located to better advantage on the Salt Fork, some fifty miles further west, which is about the western limit capable of settlement. The point near the Salt Plain would not be well supplied with wood, and the water in this region is generally bad; and though the post might be of some service in the event of the salt ever becoming of value to the country to the east, still the garrison stationed here would be doomed to almost unqualified wretchedness, and it may be even doubted if the health of the troops would permit them to remain. From this point west to the Cimmarron the country is very deficient in wholesome water and grass, and destitute of wood even for fuel. A post on the Cimmarron would be in a region to furnish protection to the travellers from the mouth of the Kansas as well as along the route proposed. Good water and grass exist here, but timber and fuel are somewhat scarce. If, therefore, posts are to be established on this route, it seems to me that one near the Arkansas, and one near the Cimmarron road, are all that should at present be attempted.

If the branch road to the Canadian be selected in preference to the one along the boundary, the following arrangement of posts would be

desirable: First, that the present Forts Arbuckle and Washita be abandoned, and one put in their stead at a point some forty miles to the west of old Fort Holmes. This is the western limit of cultivable land, and would probably be as efficient as the two posts now established. It would be some distance below the point of junction of the proposed branch road with the main route, but at that point there is not an equally desirable location for a military post.

A second post might well be established at Valley creek, in longitude 101° , which is a favorable locality, and in the country of the Kioways and Comanches. The third post should be at Tucumcari creek. These three posts along the Canadian are recommended by Lieutenant Simpson in his report, and are not only the most favorable localities, but most desirably placed. The last mentioned would be in a country very deficient in wood. The first would not be necessary, except as a better location for the troops now at Forts Washita and Arbuckle. No post in this connexion seems called for from Missouri to the Canadian river, as it passes in this portion through the Cherokee country, who are semi-civilized and friendly, and whose interests would probably be served by the opening of the road.

I would, in view of all facts and considerations, advise that, if an appropriation is desired, \$50,000 be asked to open the road from the Missouri line to the Canadian river, near the 99th meridian, and \$50,000 to establish a post on Valley creek or such point for the protection of the route as a reconnaissance for that purpose should indicate.

A post on the Arkansas would undoubtedly do much to aid the settlement and development of that region, but it does not seem called for as a measure of defence to settlers, or of protection to travellers.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. K. WARREN,

1st Lieutenant Top. Engr's, in charge.

Hon. JOHN B. FLOYD, *Secretary of War.*